

Public Health Committee Testimony

March 12, 2008

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Raised Bill No ~~5002~~: ***AN ACT CONCERNING HOSPITAL STAFFING AND PATIENT ACCESS TO DEEP SEDATION AND GENERAL ANESTHESIA.***

Good afternoon Representative Sayers, Senator Handley, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Joanne Chapin, an RN at New Milford Hospital and Vice President of Health Care for AFT Connecticut. Our Union represents over 26,000 professional employees across the state; including 5,100 nurses and other health care professionals working in seven acute care hospitals including Manchester, Lawrence & Memorial, Windham, Danbury, and the John Dempsey Hospital.

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I am here today regarding Raised Bill 5002, An Act Concerning Hospital Staffing & Patient Access to Deep Sedation and General Anesthesia.

On behalf of our Union I would like to thank you for raising the issue of safe staffing in our hospitals. As you know, this issue represents a battle we have been engaged in for several years, as have many states across our nation. We are committed to ensuring that there is adequate staffing in our hospitals as well as requiring hospitals to provide information regarding staffing to consumers. We believe that Section One of this bill is a good starting point for discussion, as it begins to mirror what other states such as New Jersey have used to begin solving the problem. However, we are concerned that the issue of disclosure does not appear to have been addressed.

We are heartened by the provisions in the bill that consider professional skill mix when determining the staffing plans. We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks to improve this bill. To that end, we respectfully suggest several changes to section one.

For example, we continue to believe that public disclosure is crucial. We acknowledge that certain limitations are placed on consumer's choice when requiring hospital care. For example, where their physicians practice, insurance networks, etc. It is precisely because of these limitations, that full disclosure is imperative – patients should be going into hospitals with “eyes wide open!”

In closing, our Union will continue to work toward both full disclosure of information regarding our state's hospitals, as well as staffing that is directly linked to a mix of patient acuity and nursing skills. As I stated earlier, we appreciate your effort and look forward to working with the Committee to achieve these goals.